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AUTHOR	de Kadt, Elizabeth
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ABSTRACT

A study investigated requests as speech acts in "Zulu English," the English of Zulu first-language speakers, seeking to explain miscommunication in interactions between Zulu- and English-speakers by pointing to pragmatic transfer as one possible cause. Data were collected by means of a series of discourse completion tests in Zulu, Zulu English, and South African English (SAE), and analyzed using a methodology that allows head acts of requests to be graded on a scale of indirectness. Requests in Zulu and Zulu English were shown to be significantly more direct in formulation than requests in SAE. Possible implications of the findings in the context of politeness theory are discussed, and it is suggested that the often unsuccessful politeness strategies used in Zulu English result in part from the cross-cultural nature and positioning of this language, being influenced in their verbal dimensions largely by Zulu strategies and in their nonverbal dimensions largely by those of SAE. (MSE)

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Politeness Phenomena in South African Black English

Elizabeth de Kadt

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POLITENESS PHENOMENA IN SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ENGLISH

Elizabeth de Kadt

This paper investigates requests as speech acts in "Zulu English", the English of Zulu first language speakers. In the context of recent discussions in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics, it seeks to contribute to the explanation of miscommunication in interactions between Zulu-and English-speakers by pointing to pragmatic transfer as one possible cause of such miscommunication. Data collected by means of a series of discourse completion tests in Zulu, Zulu English and South African English are analysed according to the methodology of the CCSARP project, which allows the Head Acts of requests to be graded on a scale of indirectness; requests in Zulu and Zulu English are shown to be significantly more direct in formulation than requests in SAE. Possible implications of these findings for Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness are discussed; and it is suggested that the -- often unsuccessful -- strategies of politeness used in Zulu English result in part from the cross-cultural nature and positioning of this language, being influenced in their verbal dimensions largely by Zulu strategies, and in their non-verbal dimensions largely by those of SAE.

Politeness phenomena have to date been scarcely researched in South Africa. Hence, rather than give answers, I will here be attempting to raise a series of questions for future investigation.

South Africa is a multilingual country. Official documents such as the 1980 census list the following languages as spoken by the population of some 40 million: the two official languages, English and Afrikaans, 10 indigenous (Black) languages, 5 Indian languages and at least six immigrant languages (Lanham/Prinsloo, 1978, p. 30). But the actual situation is much more diverse, in that the indigenous languages in particular tend to lack the degree of uniformity suggested by such a list and rather form a dialect continuum. Given this situation, a high degree of multilingualism is to be expected. In the urban areas, Whites tend to be bilingual in English and Afrikaans; Blacks tend to be multilingual, in that they will often speak two or even three Black languages, and in many cases, also have some command of English or Afrikaans; whereas Whites who have a working knowledge of a Black language are still unusual enough to raise comment. During the last 15 years, the former dominance of Afrikaans as the language of officialdom has clearly shifted in favour of English as dominant lingua franca;[1] and this tendency is being further strengthened during the present democratization of the country.

Yet in spite of the frequent interaction between speakers of different languages and from different cultural backgrounds, there has to date been relatively

little investigation of these communicative processes in South Africa. The main exception are various papers by Chick, who has raised a number of important issues concerning interaction between speakers of indigenous languages and "European" languages from the viewpoint of interactional sociolinguistics (Chick, 1985; Chick, 1986). However, the problems inherent to this interaction have in recent years been forced upon the attention of academics by the reintegration of the previously segregated "White" universities. The English-medium liberal universities now register a large number of students with English as a second or third language. For the large majority of these students, entering one of these universities brings them for the first time into an environment where they are expected to negotiate large portions of their life in English. It is not surprising that attempts at communication often result in miscommunication or communicative failure. This paper will discuss insights gained during a first attempt to investigate some aspects of the pragmatics of intercultural communication among students at the University of Natal in Durban.

Encounters between native- and non-native speakers of English should clearly be viewed in the context of the discussion around cross-cultural communication. As Thomas (1983) has pointed out, this concept applies generally to "communication between two people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background" (Thomas, 1983, p. 91). It is now widely recognized that pragmatic interference is a significant source of cross-cultural miscommunication, for, as Thomas continues, "Regional, ethnic, political, and class differences are undoubtedly reflected as much by a diversity of pragmatic norms as they are by linguistic variations" (ebd.). This will be even more the case when speakers from two completely different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are involved. The multiplicity of pragmatic factors involved has been summarised by Tannen (1984), who distinguishes "eight levels of differences in signalling how speakers mean what they say" (p. 189): "when to talk; what to say; pacing and pausing; listenership; intonation and prosody; formulaicity; indirectness; and cohesion and coherence" (p. 194). Fluency in a second language ideally includes a sensitivity to the pragmatic habits of that language; but, as Blum-Kulka (1989) points out, a number of case studies have demonstrated that "even fairly advanced language learners' communicative acts regularly contain pragmatic errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value" (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989, p. 10). Thomas sees pragmatic failure as a "very important and much neglected source of cross-cultural miscommunication. 'Important', because unlike linguistic error, which tends at worst to reflect upon the speaker as a less than adequate user of the language, pragmatic failure may reflect badly upon the speaker as a person. 'Neglected', because, again unlike linguistic error, pragmatic failure is rarely apparent in the surface structure of an utterance and even when it is diagnosed, it is not simple to treat" (Thomas, 1984, p. 227). Hence the two main types of pragmatic failure, as distinguished by Thomas: "*sociopragmatic failure* in which learners assess the relevant situational factors on the basis of their native sociopragmatic norms, and *pragmalinguistic transfer*, in which native procedures and linguistic means of speech act performance are transferred to interlanguage communication" (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989, p. 10).

These two types of pragmatic failure doubtless underpin much of the unease experienced in cross-cultural communication in South Africa; but it is the long-term consequences of such failed interactions which are cause for particular concern. As Gumperz points out when discussing British-English and Indian-English interaction in England: "Rather than being understood as clashes between cultural styles, the frustrating encounters were usually interpreted in light of racial prejudices or attributed to personality traits" (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989, p. 6); and this is doubtless still more the case where cross-cultural communication takes place largely in the context of a society formed and informed by 40 years of apartheid. In the South African context, Chick (1985) too speaks of the "negative cultural stereotypes generated by repeated intercultural communication failures" and concludes: "Once generated. these stereotypes are passed on from generation to generation without the need for the reinforcement of repeated communicative failure. Moreover, by providing a justification or rationalization for discrimination, they contribute to forces which maintain the social barriers and power differential among the different groups.." (Chick, 1985, p. 317). These factors are spelled out in greater detail in Chick, 1986, where it is argued that "the consequences of asynchronous intercultural encounters... combine with larger, historically-given and structural forces to create and sustain a negative cycle of socially created discrimination" (Chick, 1986, p. 34). Clearly, the analysis of cross-cultural communication is by no means solely of academic interest to South Africans.

The title of my paper reads "Politeness Phenomena in South African Black English"; but, in reporting on data obtained from native Zulu-speakers, I will be dealing with one large segment of South African Black English (SABE) which I will term Zulu English. These two terms, SABE and Zulu English, require some comment. It is a matter of some debate as to whether one can legitimately speak of SABE as one recognizable variety of South African English (SAE). On the basis of research into typical features of accent and stress, lexicon and syntax which are found to persist even with fluent speakers, Buthelezi (1989) concludes that such a dialect is emerging, at least among the students she has studied; her data is drawn from students at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg with a wide variety of indigenous languages as first languages. She attributes the emergence of such a dialect to the following factors: a cultural lifestyle which encourages code-mixing; high enclosure which leads to group cohesiveness; religious affiliations; overall political experience in South Africa; and a highly disadvantaged educational experience, in that the racially segregated "Black" schools generally lack basic facilities such as text-books, and language teachers are almost never native speakers of English (Buthelezi, 1989, p. 39-44). Although competence in English is a precondition for registration at the University of Natal, first-year students tend to experience serious problems with comprehension, note-taking, etc. Even with those who succeed in overcoming such difficulties, however, problems of communication persist, although Black students make a conscious effort to adapt to the norms of SAE speakers. Given this situation, Buthelezi is doubtless correct in pointing to variability as the main constraint affecting any definition of SABE (and equally Zulu English) (Buthelezi, 1989, p. 57). Our term Zulu English, if interpreted as

"the English spoken by Zulu-speakers", will firstly cover the whole continuum of language ranging from learners' early attempts at communication to close approximations to SAE; and secondly for the individual speaker it may well not be a fixed variety but an interlanguage which will be subject to modification over time.

There are, of course, substantial differences between the cultural background of English- and Zulu-speakers. The traditional Zulu social system has been well documented by Krige (1936) (compiling mainly from the older sources available); there is a major study by Raum (1973) of the *hlonipha* or avoidance customs of the Zulus; and a study of Zulu symbols and thought patterns by Berglund (1976). Krige notes the "strictly patrilineal tendency" and the "hierarchy of age" (Krige, 1936, p. 27). According to Raum, "Hlonipha conduct reveals that Zulu society is built upon a complex hierarchy of authority positions" (Raum, 1973, p. 509). He further concludes: "Hlonipha ... are the pyramid of respect upon which the Zulu ethos is raised. They link in each instance an inferior to superior status in traditional forms of expressing deference, the link not being without some reciprocity" (ebd., p. 1.) The words "respect" and "deference" are of course central to any study of politeness; Raum details the multitude of *hlonipha* of action which express this respect: the social variables involved are principally kinship, sex, age and power. This respect is also reflected through language, in which context we may properly refer to it as politeness; and here too a whole series of phenomena is involved. To my knowledge no systematic investigation of this field has been conducted; but at least the following aspects seem to be involved: posture (subordinates should be seated), the avoidance of eye contact by subordinates, gesture (especially rubbing one's hands together when asking for something), pauses, the order of speaking, address terms, conversational strategies (the role of hints, to which we will refer later), and vocabulary (*hlonipha* of language). Hence it would seem, that in investigating politeness in Zulu, only an ethnographic approach would be truly appropriate.

Yet the situation is still further complicated by the now far advanced processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, which have seen an ever-increasing destruction of traditional Zulu society, to the extent that the work of Krige, Raum and Berglund is rapidly becoming more of historical validity. There has been little systematic research of the new norms and ethos which are in the process of developing. My research assistants are able to detail the non-verbal and verbal means by which politeness is traditionally indicated in Zulu; but constantly differentiate between "deep Zululand", where they are still more or less valid, and life in the townships around Durban, where they are rapidly disappearing. Clearly, it will be impossible to generalise research results obtained in one particular location.

Let us conclude this introductory section by attempting to draw together the factors which will impinge upon politeness in Zulu English. Speakers of Zulu English are by definition Blacks who will most likely be speaking English to Whites.[2] Blacks will be speaking a second (or third) language, and one acquired under considerable disadvantages; given their powerlessness it will be very much in their interests to appear polite, and yet their traditional modes of expressing politeness are almost certain to be misunderstood.

It was against this background that it was decided to investigate aspects of

cross-cultural communication in English between speakers of Zulu and speakers of SAE. This paper will report on the pilot study of our first investigation into requests in Zulu, Zulu English and SAE. After consideration of the various models available in the literature for the analysis of requests, it was decided to use the theoretical framework of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project initiated by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), seeing that this was devised specifically to compare requests across a number of languages and, also, interlanguages. However, given the specifities of the South African situation and the complete lack of previous research in the field of Zulu speech acts, it was felt that rather than adopt the elicitation instrument of this project piecemeal, we should first identify situations which were considered by native speakers to be typical for Zulu -- and for the South African situation. On the other hand, the detailed coding scheme of this project would facilitate the further testing of the claim that primary features of requests are universal, and the identification of culture-specific interactional features in a language of a type not previously considered.

Preliminary data was obtained for all three languages by means of discourse completion tests. The starting point was the Zulu test, compiled with two native-speakers on the basis of requests as they occurred in spontaneous settings; this contained 12 scripted dialogues. On the basis of the results obtained here, the other two tests were set up in somewhat shorter form. The primary intention at this stage was to collect data located in situations in which each language would naturally be spoken and which involved a wide range of social variables. Clearly, comparability across the three languages would be desirable, but as the Zulu-speaker's use of English tends to be restricted to certain domains, involving certain interlocutors, it was found difficult to achieve comparability across all three tests: limiting the choice to situations which were directly comparable would for example have meant excluding the whole domestic domain, in which it is assumed that Zulu English is spoken only under very specific circumstances. Hence, for the data thus far obtained, the Zulu English and English tests cover much the same situations and are to a large extent directly comparable; but half the Zulu test reflects the domestic domain which has no pendant in the other two tests.

The Zulu English and English tests contained the following scripted dialogues:

A. "Lecture notes": a student has missed a lecture and wants to borrow lecture notes from a friend.
B. "Extension": a student is late with an assignment and has to approach his professor for an extension.
C. "Raise": an employee approaches his employer to ask for a raise.
D. "Staff meeting": a headmistress wants a colleague to notify school staff of a staff meeting.
E. "Policeman": a policeman wants an illegally parked car removed.
F. "Lift": a student would like a ride to a party from another student.
G. "Early submission": a professor would like a student to submit an assignment earlier than scheduled.

H. "Doctor": a doctor wants a patient with an infected throat to open his mouth.

Certainly, before proceeding with this research on a large scale, a refinement of these elicitation techniques will be necessary: it was found that in part they are still not sufficiently delimited as to reliably elicit requests; and an attempt must be made, perhaps through the social variables involved, to increase their overall comparability.

Respondents (20 for Zulu, 25 for Zulu English) and 10 for English) were chosen largely, but not exclusively from the student population at the University of Natal; for the Zulu and Zulu English tests, some data were also obtained from domestic and other workers in the vicinity. In each case the test was administered on an individual basis by a native-speaker of the language of the participant.

Further data were obtained from in-depth interviews with two Zulu-speaking student assistants, who identified very closely with the project and provided many valuable insights. These two assistants are also responsible for the ongoing collection of further data from naturally occurring conversations; however, it was not possible to utilise these data at this stage of the project.

It will be clear that my present data will be subject to the limitations of any data obtained through discourse completion tests. As Wolfson has pointed out, this method may allow a considerable quantity of data to be collected speedily, but it does have serious drawbacks: "It must always be recognized that responses elicited within a written frame are, by their very nature, not the same as spontaneous speech" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 70). This will be all the more important in the present case, in that although Zulu has been written for over a hundred years, it is still located in a primarily oral culture, and discourse patterns still seem to point strongly to former orally-based habits. This will render data obtained by means of writing of necessity somewhat suspect. Wolfson makes a further point: through this method it is also "impossible to collect the kind of elaborated (and often negotiated) behaviour which we typically find in naturally occurring interactions" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 70). We will return to this problem in due course.

The data collected were analysed by means of the CCSARP project coding scheme, as detailed in Blum-Kulka et al (1989, p. 273-294). This scheme pays particular attention to the Head Act of the request, "the minimal unit which can realize a request" (ebd., p. 275), and identifies nine possible Request Strategies; these are listed according to decreasing level or directness of "degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution" (ebd., p. 278). They are the following:

1. mood derivable "Open the door"
2. performatives "I'm asking you to open the door"
3. hedged performatives "I would like to ask you to..."
4. obligation statements "You'll have to ..."
5. want statements "I want you to ..."
6. suggestory formulae "How about ...?"

7. query preparatory "Can you/Could you/Would you mind .."
8. strong hints "Why is the door closed?"
9. mild hints "It's very hot in here." (ebd., p. 278-281).

Blum-Kulka subsequently groups these nine strategies into three major levels of directness: the most direct, explicit level (1-5). the conventionally indirect level (6-7) and the nonconventionally indirect level or hints (7-8) (ebd., p. 46-47). Further sources of variation of these Head Acts are possible through changes in perspective,

Table 1. Request strategies in Zulu English and South African English.

Dial. Sett.s:		Lect. nts.	Ext.-sion	Raise	Staff meet.	Pol.	Lift	Early Subm.	Doc.			
			Z U L U		E N G L I S H					Total	%	
Total resp.		24	20	25	18	22	24	21	17	171	100	
Request Strategies	1	6		2	13	13	1	7	13	55	32.1	
	2					1				1		
	3		2							2		43.8%
	4							4		4		
	5	1	1	6		1	4			13		
	6							3		3		
	7	16	8	6	4	3	13	7	4	61	35.6	37.4%
	8		9	8		4	5			26	15.2	
	9	1		3	1		1			6		18.7%
		S O U T H		A F R I C	A N	E N	G L I	S H		Total	%	
Total resp.		7	10	9	8	10	10	10	8	72	100	
Request Strategies	1				1	6			6	13	18.0	
	2											
	3			2						2		25%
	4					1				1		
	5			2						2		
	6											
	7	6	7	4	7	3	8	10	2	47	65.3	65.3%
	8	1	3	1			2			7	9.7	
	9											9.7%

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and through internal modifications (downgraders and upgraders); however, in a paper of this limited scope, not much attention will be paid to these.

Table 1 shows the distribution of requests over the nine request strategies in Zulu English and English. (Given the limitations of my data, I would, of course, by no means wish to claim the validity of this distribution for each language by itself; but a comparison of the two languages does enable certain interesting differences in distribution to be pinpointed.)

Table 2 shows the results of the comparable investigation into Zulu request strategies, based, as explained above, to a certain extent on different conversational situations. In my discussion I will, however, concentrate on the English and Zulu English data, only referring on occasion to the Zulu data.

Table 2. Request strategies in Zulu

Using Blum-Kulka's three major levels of directness, English-speakers favour

Dial. Sett.s:		Lect. nts.	Ext.	Raise	Staff	Pol.	Toy	Tidy up	Elec.	Black board	Gran	Church	Total	%	
Total resp.		19	-*	19	12	19	20	20	18	16	18	19	180	100	
Request Strategies	1	5			3	8		8	1	9	18	3	55	30.5	68.7%
	2	10		4	6	1	16	1	8	4		8	58	32.2	
	3												-	-	
	4				1	1		1				4	7	3.8	
	5					1				2		1	4	2.2	
	6														6.6%
	7	3		2	2		1	1	1	1		1	12	6.6	
	8	1		7		7	3	9	5			2	34	18.8	24.3%
	9			6		1			3				10	5.5	

* The results for "Extension" were excluded, as the test did not reliably produce requests.

the conventionally indirect forms (65%), with direct requests lagging considerably (25%) and hints coming in a poor third (10%). Speakers of Zulu English, on the other hand, favour direct forms (44% -- the bulk of these being imperatives 32%), followed closely by conventionally indirect requests (37%), with hints considerably more in evidence than in English (19%). This marked tendency in Zulu English to greater directness is further underlined by the very frequent use of "can" rather than "could" in conventionally indirect requests, as opposed to the almost standard "could" of the English-speakers. When comparing request strategies for particular situations, Zulu English uses a larger number of imperatives for "Lecture notes", "Early submission' and "Staff meeting". Could this perhaps point to a somewhat differing view of role relationships? In both "Early submission" and "Staff meeting" there is a combination of social distance and power on the part of the speaker. As

regards "Early submission", the speaker is asking a considerable favour of a subordinate, and it is noticeable that English-speakers go to great lengths to mitigate the imposition on the student; this feature is almost completely lacking in the Zulu English data. Is this a reflex of the authoritarian nature of traditional Zulu society, which seems to be persisting even today? Or is it simply a lack of linguistic subtlety available in Zulu English as a perhaps somewhat reduced version of the target language? "Staff meeting", too, seems to point to a rather more authoritarian view of the role-relationship headmistress -- teacher, although in many cases the straight imperative is mitigated by the upgrader "please".

On the one hand Zulu English requests are noticeably more direct than those of English-speakers; but on the other hand, hints, which must rank as the most indirect of requests, are nearly twice as frequent as in English. This is a point stressed time and time again in discussion with my research assistants: traditionally, the deference due to interlocutors of greater age and higher social status, is largely expressed by a very indirect approach to a request, via a number of other topics; and even when the required topic has been reached, it is "rough" to put the request oneself: rather one should describe the problem and wait for one's partner to propose the hoped-for solution. This is noticeable in "Extension on essay" and particularly in "Raise", where the typical conversational structure seems to be that one details the circumstances of one's poor financial situation and hopes that an offer will be forthcoming; if not, one finally puts in the request oneself.

What reasons can be proffered for this marked tendency towards the use of direct forms in Zulu English? Firstly there is the possibility that the relatively high rating for imperatives both in Zulu English and English is in part a function of the artificial nature of the discourse completion test. Our English data, for example, are somewhat higher than the results obtained for other varieties of English by the CCSARP project. (Compare the data for Australian English elicited by Blum-Kulka et al, 1989, p. 47.) On the other hand, Hodge, when comparing requests in Tasmanian and (White) South African English, notes that South Africans use more imperatives overall than Tasmanians (Hodge, 1990, p. 125).

Secondly, there is the likelihood of pragmalinguistic transfer from Zulu into Zulu English, in that the data for Zulu show an even higher percentage of direct requests in Zulu, 62%, with 30% being imperatives and 32% performatives. This last surprising figure is explained by the fact that it is a performative which is the standard polite form in our local Zulu: *ngiçela uvale umnyango* -- I request that you close the door. However, in a total of 224 requests collected in Zulu English, only once was this form translated directly,: "I am asking you..."; and after considerable thought, my assistant gave as the English equivalent of "Ngicela" "Can you..." -- a conventionally indirect form. The "ngicela" form raises an important question: does the usual link between politeness and indirectness not hold for Zulu (and Zulu English)?

Since Brown and Levinson's analysis of politeness in terms of face, an analysis which postulated a link between degree of politeness and degree of indirectness as a linguistic universal, a considerable quantity of evidence concerning cross-cultural realization of face-threatening acts such as requests has become available, some

of which is intended to test various aspects of this theory of politeness critically. In the reissue of their book, Brown and Levinson review recent work and mention some research which shows "the relative absence of mitigating or face-redressive features associated with... requests in some communities" (Brown/Levinson, 1985, p. 27); however, they contend that "the exceptions are the kind allowed for by the specific socio-cultural variables" introduced by their theory (ebd.). The Zulu (and Zulu English) data obtained from the discourse completion tests seem to point in a similar direction, especially when one considers the standard polite request in Zulu mentioned above. In Blum-Kulka's terms this is a performative, level 2, and hence with a high directness rating -- which native-speakers are in agreement with. I have great difficulties in dealing with this form according to Brown and Levinson's criteria: closest would appear to be "negative politeness", strategy 10, "go on record as incurring a debt" -- but the Zulu completely lacks the deference inherent to "I'd be eternally grateful if you would...", and can furthermore be used towards both social superiors and inferiors. On the other hand, there would be major problems in grouping this form together with the other Zulu "bald on record" forms such as the imperative or even the subjunctive, all of which rate very low as far as politeness is concerned. Even though "ngicela" seems to be becoming to a certain extent conventionalised, we do seem here to have frequently used direct requests with a high politeness rating.

In our data for Zulu English we have also noted a large number of direct requests; yet a number of considerations point against an interpretation in terms of "low politeness". Quite apart from the general considerations of face as developed by Brown and Levinson, it is clearly in the interests of these disadvantaged speakers to be polite; a generally deferential attitude towards superiors can be observed; and there seems to be a Black perception of Whites as "not very polite". The tentative conclusion I would wish to draw is that for Zulu -- and hence also for Zulu English -- one cannot adequately analyse politeness in terms of single requests, abstracted from the context of the conversation. Rather politeness seems to be negotiated primarily by means of the non-verbal dimensions of the interaction, as detailed earlier in my paper, which create a context of politeness within which a direct request may well lose the implication of low politeness it could have according to a theory of politeness based on individual utterances.

This would then allow an explanation of some aspects of the miscommunication between Blacks and Whites on campus. Speakers of Zulu English seem to become aware, during their first six months or so on campus, of the differing interactional styles between Zulu and English and make a conscious effort to modify their discourse style accordingly. Frequently mentioned are non-verbal factors: one must meet superiors' gaze, one should not sit down until requested, one should avoid rubbing one's hands; and students also become aware of the need to "come straight to the point". However, in avoiding the main non-verbal politeness mechanisms of Zulu, there seems to be a tendency to transfer the verbal dimensions of Zulu requests, and hence to fail to adopt adequately the verbal politeness markers of English; with resulting miscommunication of the politeness intended.

Could these conclusions be seen to invalidate Brown and Levinson's general

theory of politeness, were they to be substantiated by a fuller investigation? I would rather see them as pointing to the necessity of expanding the theory in two directions. Firstly, non-verbal components of communication need to be included. Brown and Levinson do, in fact, mention that this would ideally be necessary, but point to the lack of suitable data (Brown/Levinson, 1987, p. 91-92). I would argue that it is necessary to include non-verbal components not only for "exotic" languages such as Zulu, but equally so for the standard languages of the linguistic repertoire like English, where non-verbal components are so familiar as to pass unnoticed. I would further point to the necessity of expanding the data to include a larger number of complete conversations, in order to facilitate the demonstration of how politeness is mutually negotiated throughout an interaction. These two extensions of the present theory would be necessary to construct an adequate theory of politeness for Zulu English. On such a basis, it would then be possible to ask to what extent the strategies identified can be accommodated within the considerations of face postulated by Brown and Levinson, or whether these would need modification.

One further point is raised by Brown and Levinson's differentiation between the (more direct) positive politeness and the (less direct) negative politeness, both of which can be used to compensate any threat to face. Wolfson draws out the possible social implications of this distinction as follows: "Negative politeness is seen as a strategy of those who are in some way less powerful than the addressee, while positive politeness is a sign of social closeness" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 68). (Such an interpretation could, of course, tie in closely with the situation of Blacks in contact with Whites under apartheid.) Brown and Levinson suggest the possibility of extending their work beyond the level of the speech act, and this suggestion is taken up by Scollon and Scollon (1983), who first encompass all of Brown and Levinson's five politeness strategies in the basic distinction between deference and solidarity, and subsequently attempt to characterize overall systems of interaction as solidarity or deference politeness systems. They describe these two postulated systems in the following way: "A solidarity politeness system ... would favour low numbered strategies (bald on record and positive politeness) while a deference politeness system would favour higher numbered strategies (negative politeness, off record, or avoiding the face-threatening act). The internal dynamics of a solidarity politeness system would favour the emphasis on sameness, on group membership, and the general good of the group. Deference politeness systems would favour deference, indirectness or even avoidance in making impositions on others at all" (Scollon/Scollon, 1983, p. 175). They agree with Brown and Levinson as to the three basic ways in which these two possibilities can be realized in society, depending on the variables Power and Distance. The first possibility is an asymmetrical system, due to high Power differentials between members of the society: the more powerful interlocutors will tend to use lower numbered strategies, and the less powerful higher numbered strategies; i.e. both solidarity and deference politeness will be represented. On the other hand, if the power differential is generally low, then the variable Distance, "the social distance between S and H" (Brown/Levinson, 1987, p. 76), becomes decisive. If there is a high Distance rating in the given society, it

will tend to a deference politeness system; low Distance will tend to a solidarity politeness system. In suggesting these categories, however, Scollon and Scollon caution against the dangers of oversimplification. They point out that "even at the level of the speech act a single act may incorporate multiple strategies ... Our emphasis in this discussion is on the discourse and even the whole communicative system. We assume any communication at that level to consist of a complex structure of many different interactional strategies encoded as speech acts" (Scollon/ Scollon, 1983, p. 171).

It would be of great interest to be able to apply these categories to the three languages under consideration here. Do our data suggest any possible preliminary conclusions? We should, however, note that any discourse completion test will tend, through its structure, to reflect mainly instances of negative politeness; for, as Scollon has pointed out, "negative politeness... is specific for the particular FTA (Face Threatening Act) in hand", whereas "positive politeness ... is relevant to *all* aspects of a person's positive face." (Brown/Levinson, 1987, p. 18). Questions of this type, even more than a consideration of the politeness level of individual speech acts, presuppose a body of naturally occurring data.

It is unclear whether SAE tends more to positive politeness (as does American English) or to negative politeness (as, seemingly, does British English); possibly the British English tradition is, on the whole, somewhat stronger. This question could only be decided on the basis of an extended empirical study. As regards Zulu, however, the evidence seems somewhat contradictory. The enormous role of deference in traditional Zulu society, and especially towards older people, suggests a deference politeness system. On the other hand, several factors in Brown and Levinson's list of positive politeness strategies suggest a tendency towards positive politeness: the frequent use of names, attending to H's wants and needs before a request may be broached, jokes, the tendency to include both S and H in the activity in hand, giving reasons for requests, etc.

The data for two of the situations examined here has some bearing on this question: the particularly face-threatening "Extension' and "Raise". It is interesting that, for "Extension", 25 responses in Zulu English produced a total of 9 reasons and 4 promises; whereas English produced 3 reasons but no promises out of 10 responses. Reasons and Offers/Promises are both listed as positive politeness strategies. This tendency is even more marked in "Raise": English produced one reason out of 10 responses, Zulu English 11 out of 25, and Zulu 13 out of 20. It may well be that in particularly face-threatening situations, transfer of pragmatic habits takes place more readily; and it is interesting that here positive politeness strategies are transferred from Zulu to Zulu English. But as a general tendency, the high Power differentials of Zulu English (being almost exclusively interaction between Blacks and Whites) would seem to point very strongly in the direction of the asymmetrical politeness system outlined above. Clearly the question as to the interactional styles of these languages cannot be decided here; but it would be of great interest for future research.

The pilot study discussed here has provided few firm answers, but has raised a number of issues which would well bear further investigation. Most importantly it

underlines the urgent need for research in pragmatics based on the languages of Africa, and the contribution these languages still have to make to linguistic theory.

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THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth de Kadt is Senior Lecturer in the German Section of the Department of Europe Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa. Her special interest is the comparison of African and European languages.

NOTES

[1]Dirven (1990, p. 26) stresses that both English and Afrikaans, in spite of the present dominance of the former, are still only *relative* lingua francas, with only 44% (in 1980) claiming to be able to speak English.

[2]We will disregard cases in which English is used as lingua franca between speakers of different indigenous languages, for which no reliable data are available.

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